



Home Office

Operation Vaken

Evaluation Report – October 2013

1. Executive Summary

The Home Office's Immigration Enforcement command ensures that the immigration rules are complied with and that immigration offenders are removed from the UK.

It is better for both the UK taxpayer and offenders themselves if offenders leave the country voluntarily rather than in an enforced manner. Immigration Compliance and Enforcement teams are therefore working to identify how they can promote the visibility of enforcement operations to drive compliance and encourage more immigration offenders to leave the UK voluntarily.

Operation Vaken was a communications pilot developed to test the hypothesis that people without leave to remain in the UK would depart voluntarily if they were made aware that:

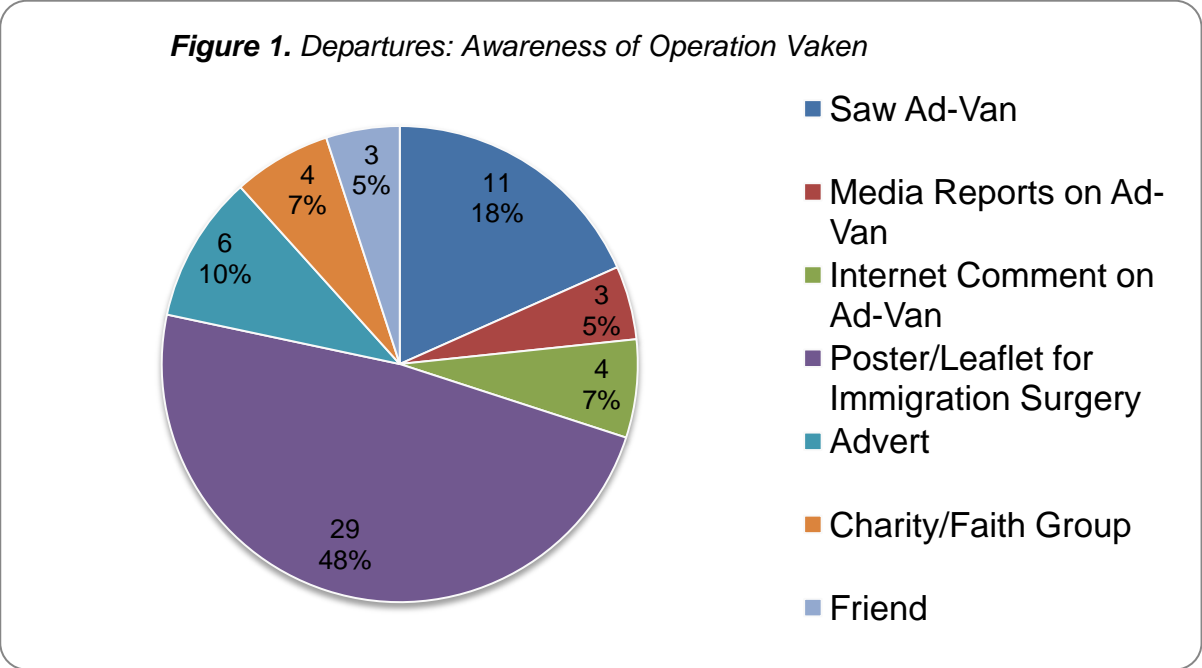
- there was a near and present danger of their being arrested;
- the voluntary departure route was explained as an option; and
- safe routes of approaching the Home Office for assistance were provided, without the fear of arrest.

The pilot took place between 22 July and 22 August 2013 in six London boroughs. It included a number of communications techniques, such as mobile billboards highlighting the risk of arrest, postcards in shop windows, adverts in newspapers, leaflets and posters advertising immigration surgeries in faith/charity group buildings.

The proactive communications phase ceased on 22 August. The pilot continued until 22 October to provide a three month period to allow for Emergency Travel Documents to be obtained and completion of the voluntary departure process for some of the nationalities encountered.

As of 22 October 2013, there have been 60 voluntary departures which we believe can be directly attributed to Operation Vaken. The report also identifies a further 65 cases that are currently being progressed to departure.

Figure 1 below sets out how the Vaken-linked cases that have departed, found out about the voluntary return route. Eleven cases (18%) were because the individual had seen the ad-van – with a further seven (12%) seeing reports of the vans in the media or online. The most effective medium, accounting for almost half the cases (48%) were static posters or leaflets advertising immigration surgeries.



The impact of the pilot was wider than the immediate area in which it was targeted. Twenty one individuals from outside the London area have either departed or are in the process of departing the UK, with individuals from Southampton, Cardiff, Great Yarmouth, Liverpool and Blackburn contacting the Operation Vaken team expressing a wish to return home. This geographical reach was likely to be as a result of the media and online coverage - for example the first removal was from a Pakistani student who read about the ad-vans in *The Guardian* newspaper. But that publicity may have come at a greater cost, with a number of concerns expressed about the ad vans.

The communication methods used in this pilot operation cost much less than an enforced removal. A single average enforced removal can cost up to £15,000, whereas the total cost of Operation Vaken was £9,740.

The most efficient use of communications expenditure was on the adverts, leaflets and posters that advertised immigration surgeries in faith and charity groups, rather than the ad vans or other forms of advertising used in the operation.

The average cost of a voluntary removal is £1,000, and the average cost of an enforced removal is £15,000. The 60 voluntary removals connected to Operation Vaken therefore represent a notional saving of approximately £830,000 compared to the costs of enforcing those removals. Some of these individuals may have remained undiscovered or may have departed voluntarily in any case, and so this estimated saving is probably the maximum directly attributable to the pilot in this way. However, Immigration Enforcement are currently working with an additional 65 individuals to progress their voluntary departure and therefore the notional savings are likely to increase further as these individuals depart.

In addition, each person living illegally in the UK is estimated to cost up to a further £4,250 per year in costs to public services¹. The return of 60 individuals, as a result of Operation Vaken, may therefore have saved an additional estimated £255,000 in public service costs annually on this basis, with savings continuing into future years.

¹ Based on Home Office estimates published in the Impact Assessment of the Immigration Bill 2013.

2. Background to Operation Vaken

Immigration Compliance and Enforcement (ICE) teams are based across the United Kingdom and have a duty to enforce the immigration rules. They primarily seek to achieve this by arresting immigration offenders or encouraging those without leave to remain in the UK to either regularise their stay or depart the UK voluntarily. ICE teams work in a variety of ways to encourage voluntary departures, for example through sustained engagement with the faith and voluntary sector organisations which are most likely to come into contact with individuals who do not have leave to remain in the UK. These can take the form of immigration surgeries in Gurdwaras, such as those undertaken by a Sikh charity in West London. West London ICE team have worked with this organisation to help more than 150 destitute Indian nationals return home voluntarily over the past two years without fear of arrest or detention by ICE teams. However, such practices are not used consistently across the country. Immigration Enforcement would prefer to expand such external engagement to encourage voluntary departures rather than use forced removals. Therefore, it is important to identify which communications tools could best support this, and to ensure that any expenditure is as efficient and effective as possible.

A communications pilot was developed to test the hypothesis that more immigration offenders would choose to depart voluntarily from the UK if they were made aware that:

- a. there was a near and present danger of their being arrested;
- b. the voluntary departure route was advertised and explained as an option; and
- c. safe routes of approaching the Home Office for assistance were provided, without the fear of arrest and enabling the offender to return home with dignity.

The concept of encouraging foreign nationals to depart voluntarily from the United Kingdom is not new, as it has been used by enforcement teams since 1980. In 2012/13, there were approximately 7,290 voluntary departures and a total of almost 28,000 cases where an individual left the UK voluntarily of their own volition or with

various degrees of support (including voluntary departures, assisted voluntary return, passenger departure data and embarkation controls).

The Home Office can offer material assistance in obtaining a travel document from the relevant High Commission or Embassy and/or can pay for a flight ticket to return home (although the latter incurs a longer ban from the UK). The most current data held by the Department indicates that the average cost of arranging a travel document and a flight ticket, for a person wishing to depart voluntarily is around £1,000². By contrast, the Department has estimated that the average enforced removal costs up to £15,000³.

It should be noted that these costs are based on costs to the Home Office Immigration Enforcement only and do not include associated legal and case-working costs arising from the litigation of a challenged enforced removal. Therefore the actual cost of an enforced removal is likely to be much higher.

Furthermore, the wider public sector costs (health, education, welfare) arising from each immigration offender may be significant; it is estimated that the return of a person, living illegally in the UK, could result in an average saving of up to £4,250 per year in public service costs⁴.

The communications pilot was named Operation Vaken and commenced on 22 July in six London boroughs. The detail of the actions undertaken are set out in the Methodology section below.

² Costs are based on data held by the Department and are indicative of the cost of removal based on a sample of cases

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⁴ Based on Home Office estimates published in the Immigration Bill 2013 Impact Assessment.

3. Methodology

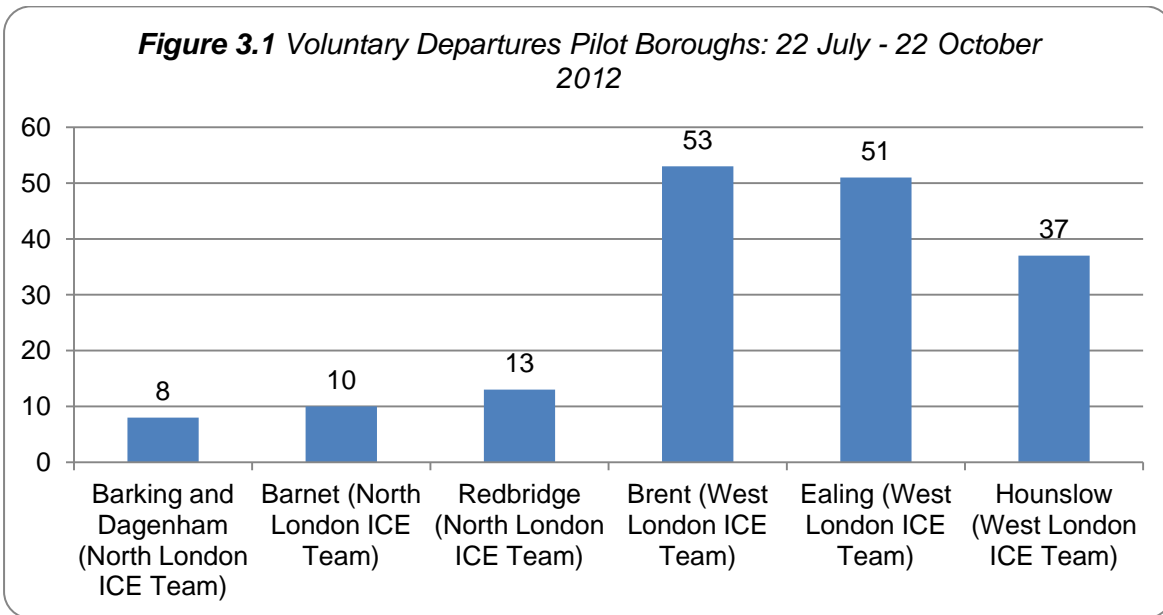
The hypothesis for this pilot was based on operational intelligence which indicated that where groups of immigration offenders were made aware of the voluntary departure route, it was more likely to be adopted. Operational feedback indicates that a series of high-profile operations in West London during the summer of 2012 had caused a spike in voluntary departures after each operation, with immigration offenders walking into the reporting centres and referencing the recent operations as their reason for presenting themselves.

Location of the pilot

Six London boroughs were chosen for the pilot. The areas were chosen to try to understand why the boroughs covered by the West London ICE team were more likely to produce voluntary departures than those covered by the North London ICE team. In the period 22 July 2012 to 22 October 2012, data held by the Department indicated that the two ICE teams delivered 141 and 31 voluntary departures respectively. Over the two years 2012 and 2013, the West London team produced 523 voluntary departures compared to 147 from the North London team, and together these made up half of the London voluntary departures (52%) with the other half split between the Central, East and South London teams.

Therefore a sample three boroughs were chosen from each area (Brent, Ealing and Hounslow were covered by West London ICE team, and Barnet, Barking and Dagenham and Redbridge were covered by the then North London ICE team⁵). The number of voluntary departures for 22 July to 22 October 2012 in each of the six London boroughs is set out in Figure 3.1 below:

⁵ Since the start of the work on this pilot, there has been a restructure of the London ICE teams. Barking and Dagenham and Redbridge are now covered by East London ICE team



A three stage communications strategy was developed and deployed in each of the six London Boroughs:

STAGE 1 - Improve awareness of local immigration enforcement activity to make immigration offenders aware that there is a real and present danger of being arrested (via Ad-Vans showing the number of arrests in the most recent week);

STAGE 2 - Inform immigration offenders that a voluntary departure route is possible (via targeted newspaper adverts, adverts in shops, money bureaux etc and leaflets/posters in the local community); and

STAGE 3 - Inform immigration offenders of safe routes to approach the Home Office without fear of arrest (via posters advertising increased immigration surgeries in local faith/charity groups and a new dedicated phone line).

A sample of all of the communications materials used is attached at Annex A.

Stage 1

Two mobile billboards circulated around the six London boroughs between 22 July and 28 July, spending approximately two days in each borough. The mobile billboards set out how many arrests there had been in the most recent week for which data were available. The advert included the Text number 78070.

Stage 2

At the same time adverts with the Text number and a dedicated landline number were placed in seven newspapers. These newspapers had been identified as being in the possession of known immigration offenders, for example they were present in residential properties in the pilot boroughs, where previous arrests were been made. These newspapers were:

- Des Pardes
- Maya News
- Nigeria Watch
- Asian Voice
- Pardes Weekly
- Leros
- Punjab Telegraph Weekly

In addition, smaller postcard advertisements were placed in approximately 300 shops, money transfer bureaux, internet cafés and community areas. These advertised the text number and dedicated phonedlines in the Immigration Reporting Centres in Hounslow and London Bridge.

Stage 3

The final stage of the campaign was designed to increase the number of immigration surgeries in the areas, following the success of the work with the Gurdwaras in Southall and Hounslow. These immigration surgeries were often undertaken, with the consent of the centres, by Immigration Officers in plain clothes without the threat of arrest. In planning this activity, it was acknowledged that although this stream of work may be productive, it was likely to have a long lead-in time due to the need to build trust with the community. This stage of the operation required the ICE Team leaders to engage with faith/charity groups in the six boroughs to see if any assistance could be provided. Posters were placed in community centres and faith/charity groups advertising the new and existing immigration surgeries.

All of the proactive communications ceased on 22 August, one month after the start of the campaign. The evaluation of the pilot took place over a longer period of three

months, as it took time to confirm and arrange the removal of some offenders. For example, after the initial referral, obtaining an Emergency Travel Document can take several months before the removal itself can take place.

Evaluation criteria

It was initially suggested that an increase in the number of voluntary departures in the six London boroughs might be a suitable indicator. However, advice from Home Office analysts made clear that due to the fluctuating nature of voluntary departures and the difficulty in ascertaining the exact prompt for the decision to return, it was not possible to identify what a statistically significant percentage increase would be. Instead, the number of attributable returns and the comparative cost that might have been incurred through an enforced removal, would provide a better indicator of success. In addition, the following indicators were agreed:

- a. the number of texts submitted to 'HOME 78070' during the campaign period;
- b. the number of voluntary departure *enquiries* to the new landline telephone numbers in Eaton House and Becket House reporting centres during the campaign period;
- c. whether there was any increase in the number of enquiries for voluntary departure in immigration surgeries in local faith/charity groups;
- d. in each of the cases above, officers would attempt to record:
 - i. how they heard about the voluntary departures scheme (i.e. which communication method, if any);
 - ii. the nationality of the individual; and
 - iii. their home address.
- e. analysis of which specific publicity materials prompted individuals to contact the hotline (postcards, adverts, immigration surgeries etc);
- f. the time spent by Home Office staff responding to calls where:
 - i. they were a hoax;
 - ii. we were able to leave a message, but continued to try to call back; and
 - iii. we were unable to leave a message, but continued to try to call back.

- g. any evidence that information passed to enforcement officers regarding allegations of immigration offenders has resulted in action being taken against specific individuals or businesses.

Given the considerable national and international comment that the Operation generated, it was also necessary to take the following into consideration in the context of this evaluation:

- a. community relations – reporting from the Metropolitan Police Service on community tension indicators following concerns from some groups that the campaign may contribute to community tensions;
- b. commentary on the number of increased immigration surgeries in the faith and voluntary sectors, following engagement made as part of Operation Vaken.

The results for these performance indicators and issues to be taken into consideration are set out in the next chapter.

Data:

The data sourced in this report has been created from records kept by operational colleagues and has been assured by the operational Senior Civil Servant lead. However, because this is local management information, the data may not fully meet the standard usually required for publication or equate to the published national statistics; as is normal with operational data, it is subject to change and revision, however it is the best data available at this point in time.

4. Results

4.1 Departures:

- As of 22 October 2013, 60 individuals had voluntarily departed the UK as a result of Operation Vaken.
- Individuals were asked how they had become aware of the Operation Vaken text or telephone numbers or immigration surgeries.
- Of the 60 individuals who have already departed, almost half became aware of the operation through posters or leaflets in an Immigration surgery, and just over one sixth had seen the Ad-Vans themselves. The full breakdown of the medium through which they became aware of Operation Vaken is shown in Figure 4.1.1.
- Just over half of those departing voluntarily as a result of the pilot were Indian nationals. The full nationality breakdown is shown in Figure 4.1.2.
- The length of the time those individuals that departed were in the UK illegally is shown in Figure 4.1.3. Only 14 of the 60 who departed had been in the UK for less than a year. Three quarters of the departures were by people who had been in the UK for more than a year, and in seven cases they had been in the UK for longer than eight years.

Figure 4.1.1. Departures: Awareness of Operation Vaken

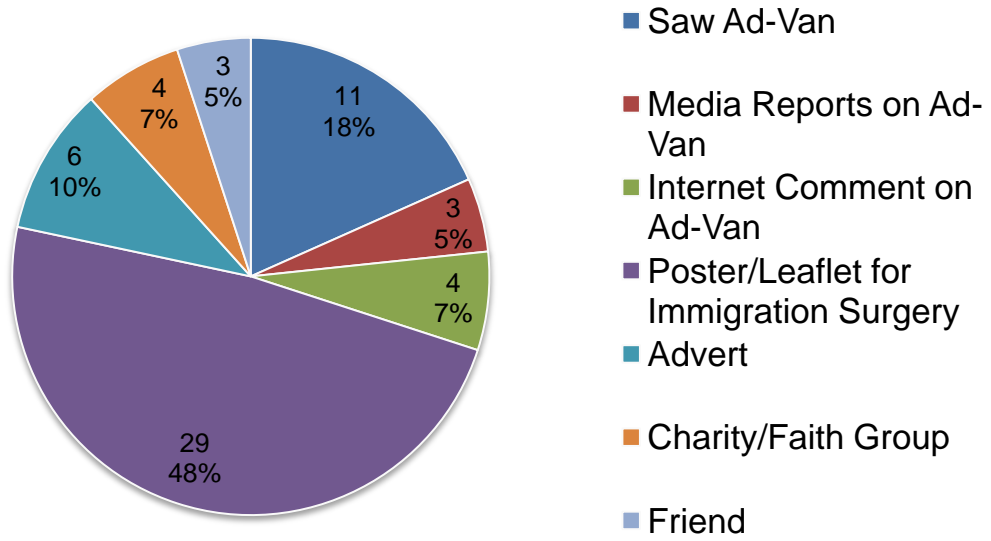


Figure 4.1.2. Departures: Nationality Breakdown

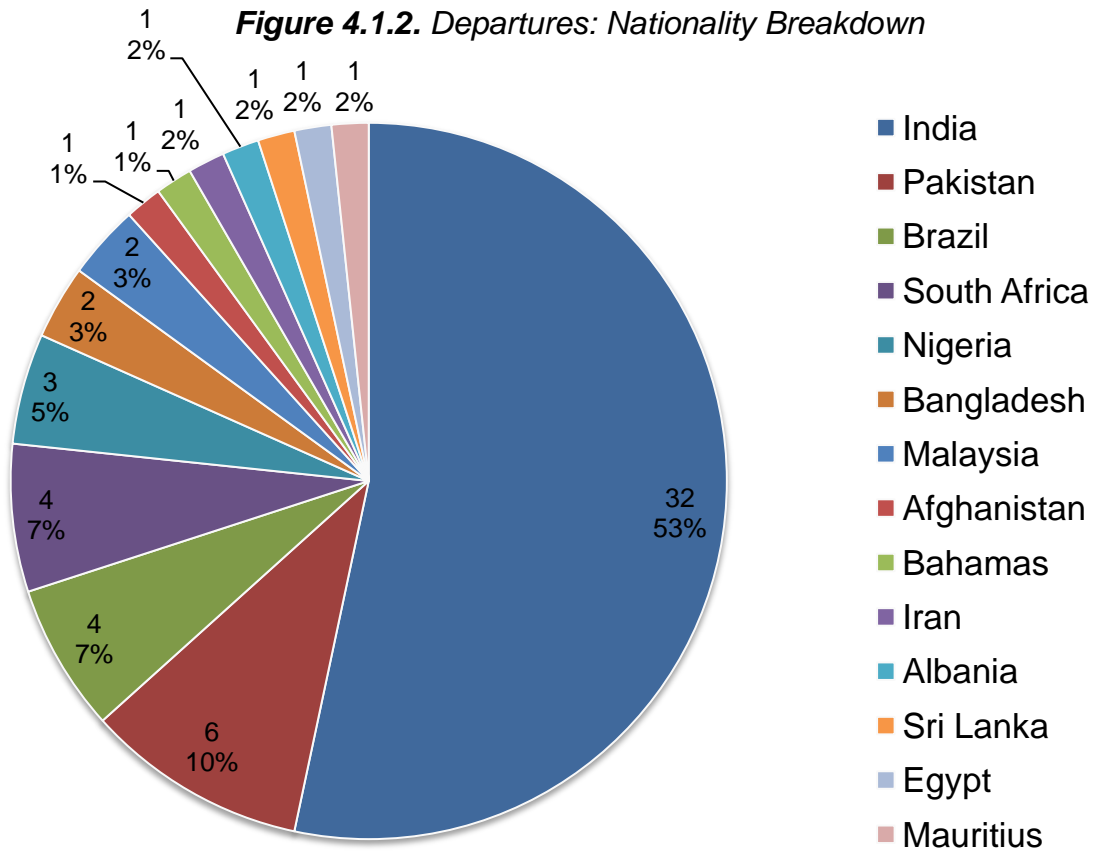
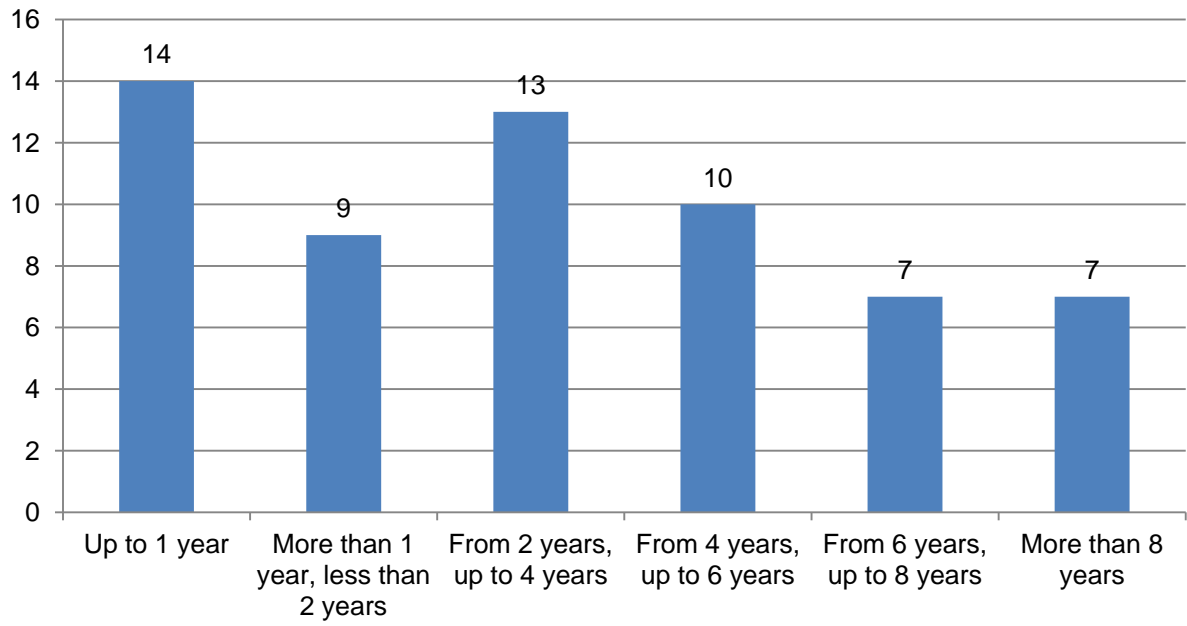


Figure 4.1.3 Departures: Length of Time Living Illegally in the UK



4.2. Case Studies:

Individuals from 23 different countries contacted the Operation Vaken team during the pilot period requesting to return home voluntarily. Below are several anonymised examples of individuals who contacted the team:

- A South African woman who arrived in the UK in 1999 and overstayed her visa, contacted the team stating that she wished to return to South Africa. She had a history of mental illness and had previously been sectioned under the Mental Health Act. The team liaised with the South African Embassy to obtain an emergency travel document and contacted the medical staff that were treating her to ensure she was fit to travel abroad. They were also contacted by her brother in South Africa who they made reception arrangements with. The team have since been contacted by her brother to confirm that she arrived safely in South Africa and is currently receiving treatment.
- A Nigerian man, who came to the UK as a visitor in 2005 and subsequently overstayed his visa, sent a text to the team after seeing the Operation Vaken Ad-Van on the television. The team helped arrange for his return to Nigeria to where he has now returned.
- An Eastern European woman who came to the UK in 2011 contacted the team stating that she was homeless and pregnant and required help to obtain a travel document and tickets as she wished to return home. When she was interviewed by the team she disclosed that she had been trafficked into the UK to work in the sex industry; on arrival her traffickers confiscated her passport. She was quickly referred to UK Human Trafficking Centre and subsequently interviewed by the police before being placed in a safe house where she was provided with support and medical care. She stated that she didn't want the traffickers to know she had spoken to the police as she feared for the safety of her family back home. She has since given birth and wishes to return home with her child. The team are currently working with her and her country's Embassy to obtain emergency travel documents.

- A Brazilian women, who arrived in the UK in 2010 as a visitor and subsequently overstayed her leave; she stated that she came to UK to secure employment to enable her to support her son in Brazil. She sent a text to the team after reading about Operation Vaken on the internet. She has since voluntarily returned to Brazil.

4.3 Ongoing Cases:

- In addition to the 60 individuals who have already departed, a further 65 individuals are currently in the process of voluntarily departing, having contacted the Operation Vaken team.
- A breakdown of the current progress of these cases is shown in Figure 4.3.1 . The Operation Vaken team are currently assisting 40 individuals with obtaining Emergency Travel Documents (ETD) to facilitate their departure; a further 20 individuals have either booked appointments with Operation Vaken staff to initiate the returns process or are providing further information to allow their departure to be facilitated.
- The picture presented by these 65 outstanding cases is similar to that previously shown for the 60 cases that have already been concluded. The charts below show the full picture for all cases identified through the pilot, both those departed and those not yet concluded.
- Posters and leaflets in immigration surgeries were by far the most common way of finding out about the pilot, accounting for over half of these cases (54%).
- Two thirds of the cases related to Indian nationals.
- Two in five cases originated in the six boroughs targeted by the pilot, with another two fifths coming from other parts of London and the remaining fifth from other parts of the UK.

Figure 4.3.1. Current Progress of Operation Vaken contacts

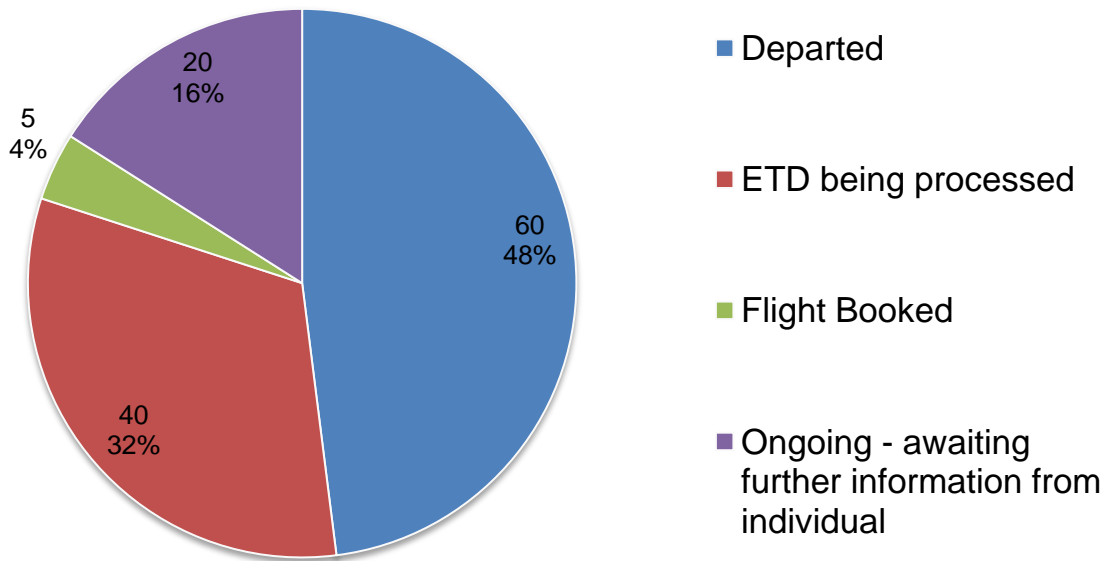


Figure 4.3.2 Departures and Ongoing: awareness of Operation Vaken

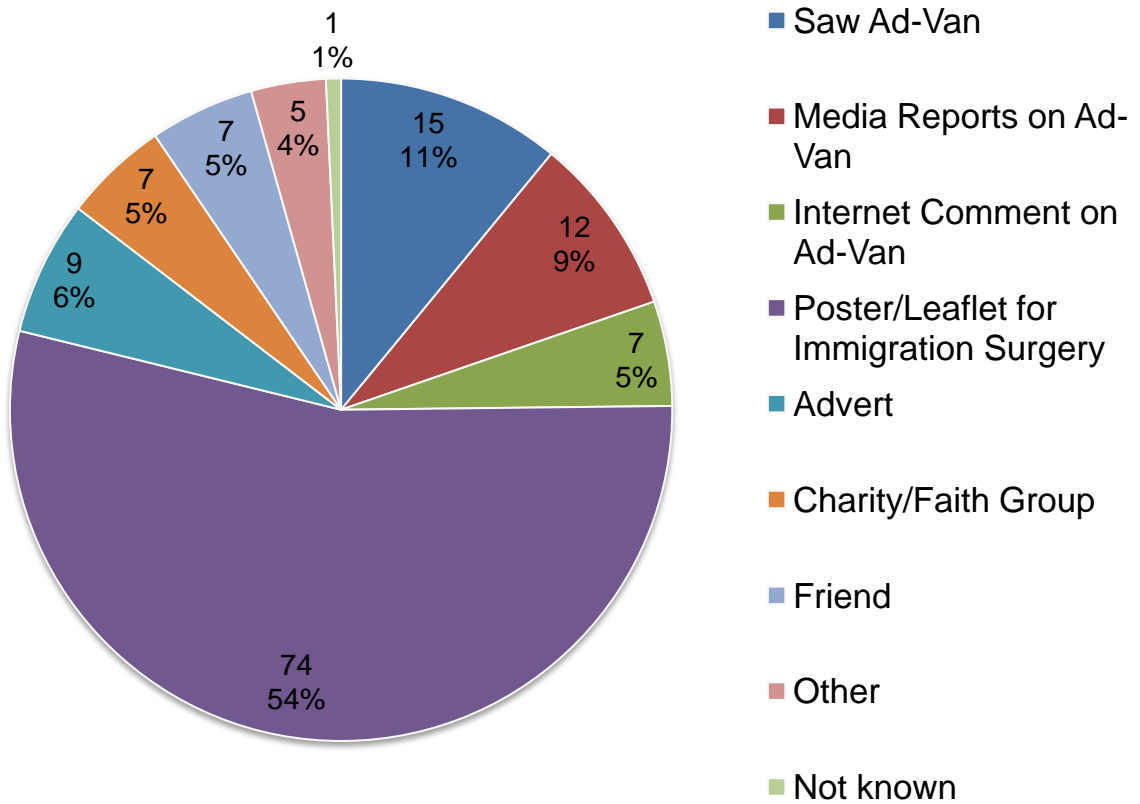


Chart 4.3.3. Departed and Ongoing: Method of Contact

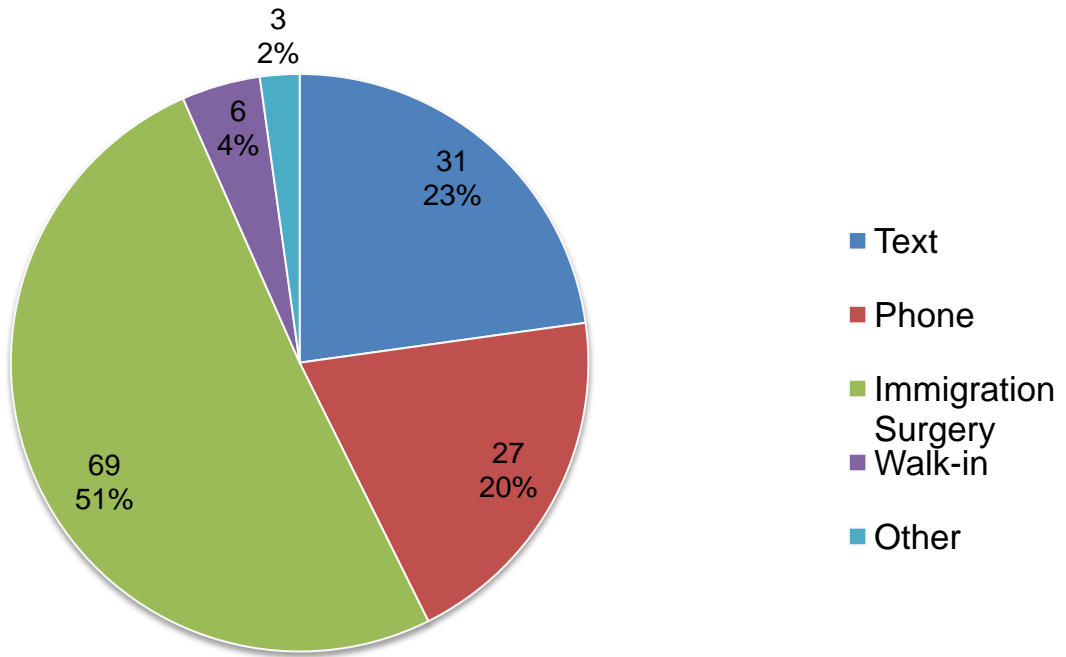


Figure 4.2.4. Departed and Ongoing cases: Nationality Breakdown

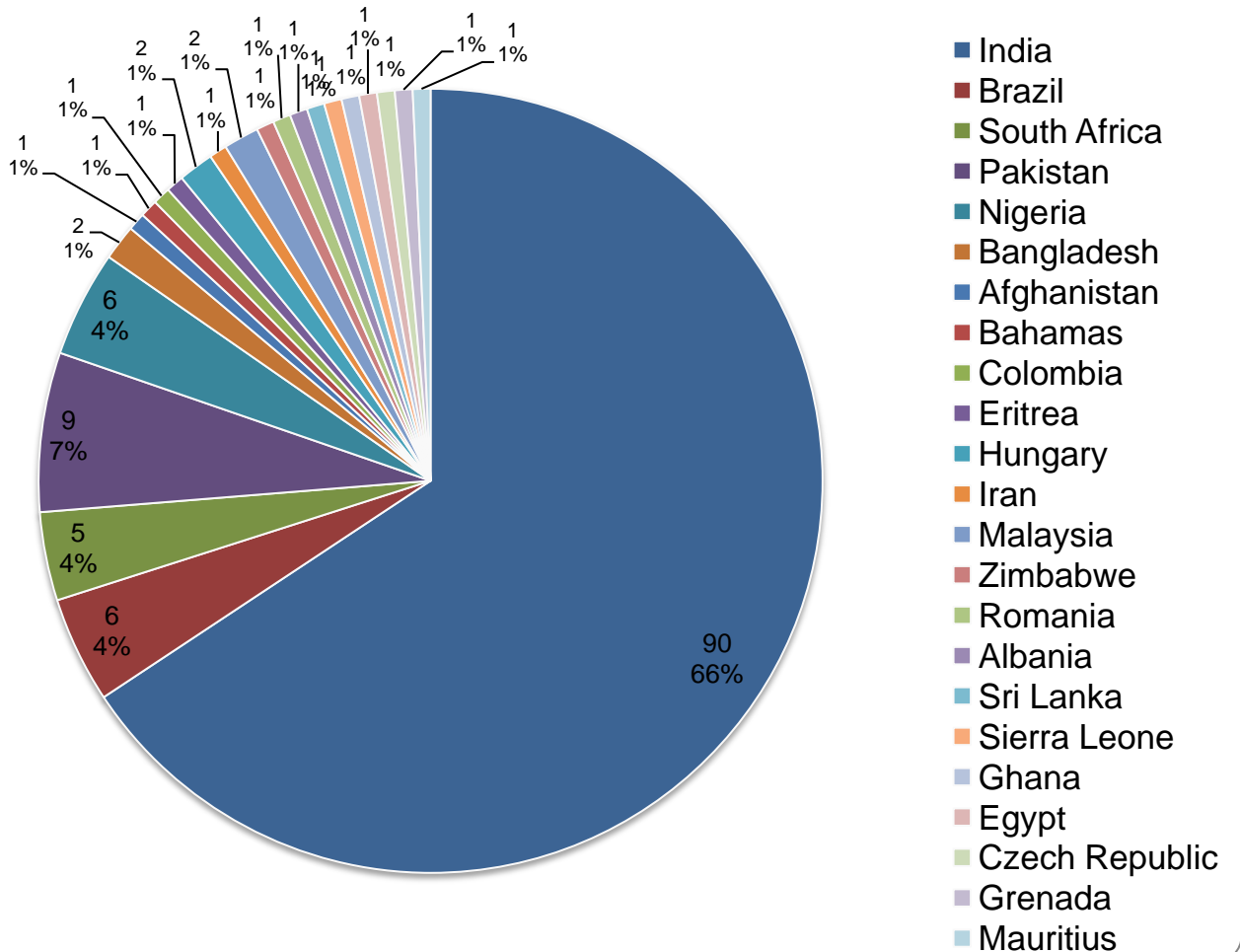


Figure 4.3.5. Deported and Ongoing cases: Location

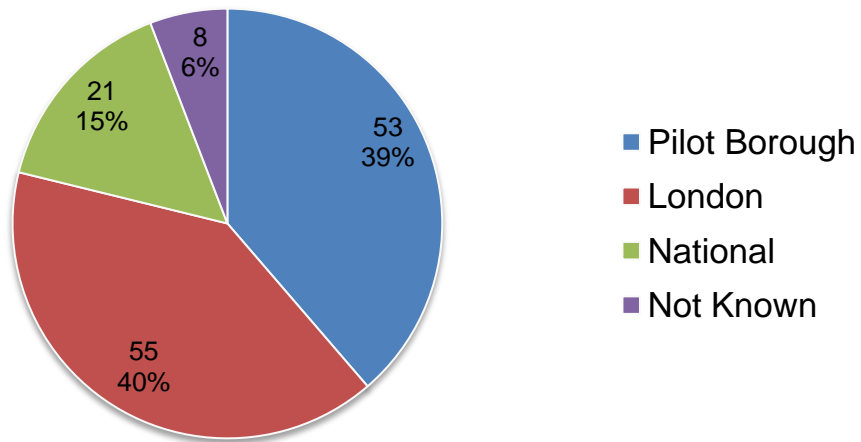
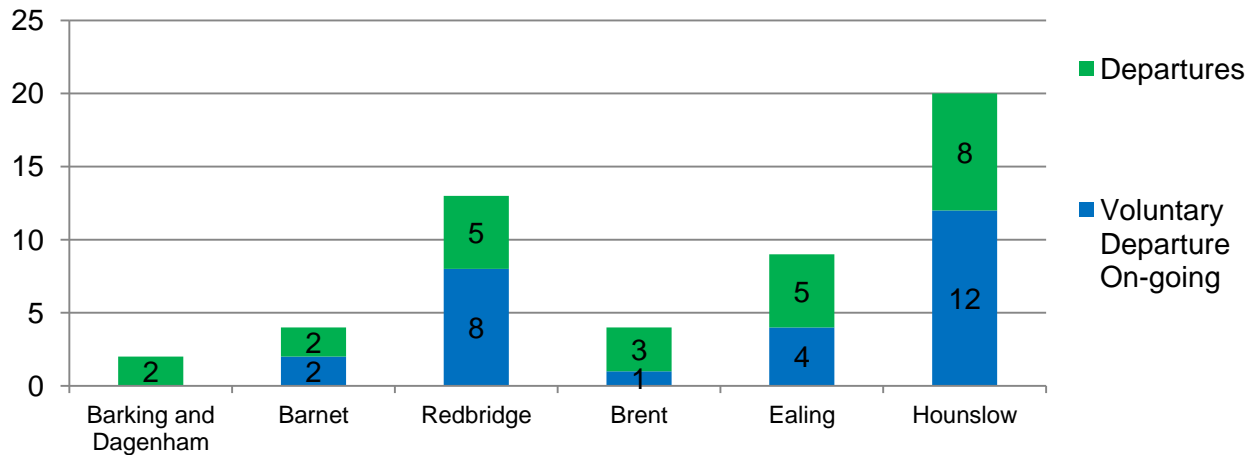
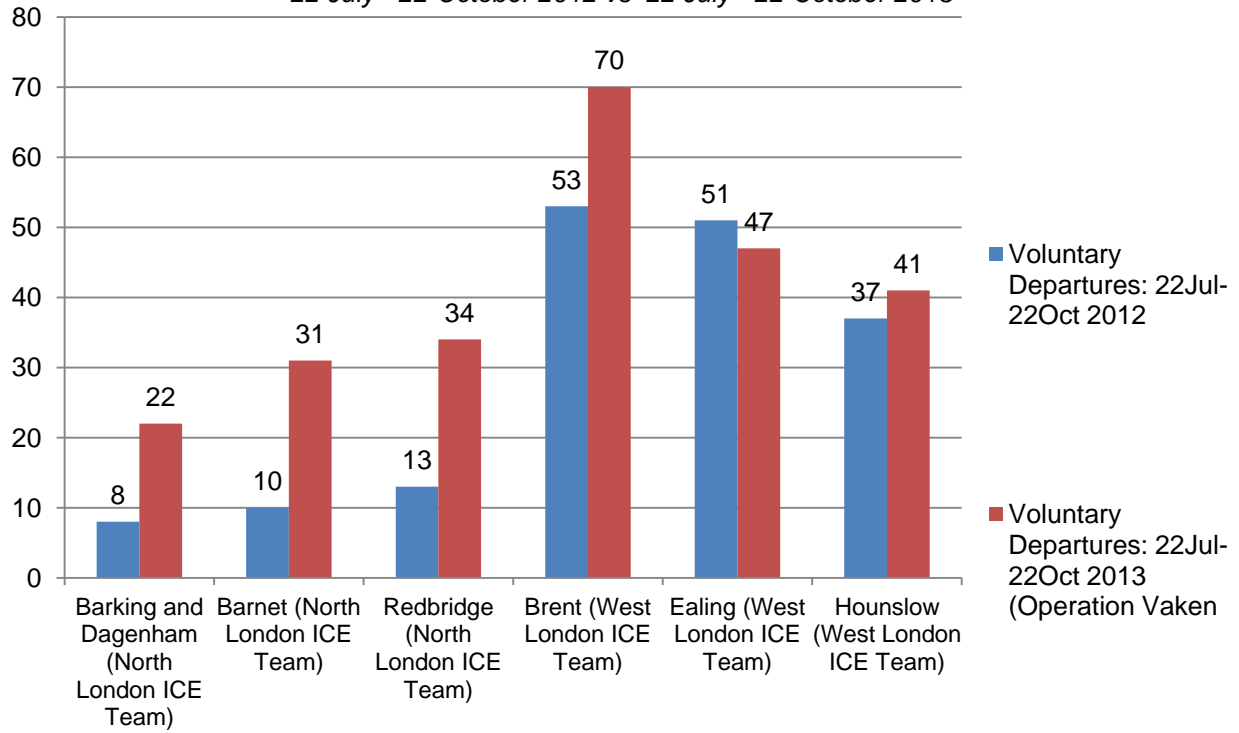


Figure 4.3.6. Pilot Boroughs: Departures/Ongoing



- Figure 4.3.6. shows the number of individuals from the six boroughs that contacted the dedicated Operation Vaken team expressing a desire to return home voluntarily.
- Figure 4.3.7 shows the total number of individuals in each of the pilot boroughs that voluntarily returned home during the pilot period and the same period the previous year. These include individuals who contacted the dedicated Operation Vaken team, along with individuals that identified themselves to Home Office reporting centres and pre-existing immigration surgeries.
- The number of voluntary departures in the six boroughs involved in the pilot were 245 over the period of the pilot, that is 42% higher than the same period the year before. Whilst this was a greater increase than seen nationally, the number of voluntary departures recorded in the other areas of London, excluding the six pilot boroughs, were 554, or 77% higher than the same period previously. Although these numbers are small and are unable to account for other pilots and initiatives that took place in the earlier year, taking these figures at face value does not imply any additional impact on voluntary departures within the geographical scope of Operation Vaken compared to routine enforcement activity.

**Figure 4.3.7. Comparison of Total Voluntary Departures in Pilot Boroughs
22 July - 22 October 2012 vs 22 July - 22 October 2013**



4.4 Cost Effectiveness:

The paid-for communications elements of the campaign included

Channel	Activities	Budgeted cost
AdVans (Mobile 48 sheets)	x2 Advans covered the target geographies during a 7 day period for 8 hours a day.	£4,480 Media £980 Production
Display advertising	Local titles within target community	£2,000
Translation costs	Translating and supply print-ready artwork	£500
A6 Classified postcards promoting Voluntary departures	<i>A6 Classified cards (in the course of the operation, Immigration Officers found that the vast majority of local businesses offered to install the postcards for free and so only £19 was actually spent.</i>	£320
Distribution costs of A6 Classified ads	25 Retail outlets per six target areas	£300
A4 Posters promoting Voluntary departures	A4 single language posters	£360
1/3 A4 Leaflets promoting Voluntary departures	DL bilingual trifold Leaflets	£800
		TOTAL COST: £9,740

Figure 4.4.1. Comparative Spend: Estimated Total Costs and Savings of 60 Operation Vaken Departures vs 60 Enforced Removals:

Total Number of voluntary departures to date	Total cost of arranging ETD and ticket for 60 individuals ³ (£)	Operation Vaken Communication Costs (£)	Total Cost of Operation Vaken Departure (£)	Estimated total cost of 60 enforced removals ⁴ (£)	Notional Saving vs enforced removal per person (£)
60	60,000	9,740	69,740	900,000	830,260

Figure 4.4.2. Costs and Savings per Comms Method:

Comms Method	Cost	Number of voluntary departures	Cost of Comms method per departure (£)	Average Cost of arranging ETD and ticket, per person ⁶ (£)	Estimated Total Average Cost per person (£)	Average Notional Saving vs Enforced Removal per person (£) ⁷	Total Average Notional Saving vs Enforced Removal (£)
Ad Vans	£5460	11	496	1,000	1,496	13,504	148,544
Adverts	£2000	6	334	1,000	1,334	13,666	81,996
Leaflets/ Poster	£2280	29	79	1000	1,079	13,922	403,709

- Notional savings and costs per communications method are based on the current 60 departures through Operation Vaken. Notional savings are likely to increase as on-going cases are converted into voluntary departures (Figure 4.4.1).
- In addition, whilst an enforced removal is one clear alternative outcome, it is possible that some of those identified through the pilot would not otherwise have come forward or been identified, at least in the short-term, and so may not have been removed.
- Furthermore, the wider public sector cost (health, education, welfare) arising from each immigration offender is significant and is not included in the above notional benefits; it is estimated that the return of a person, living illegally in

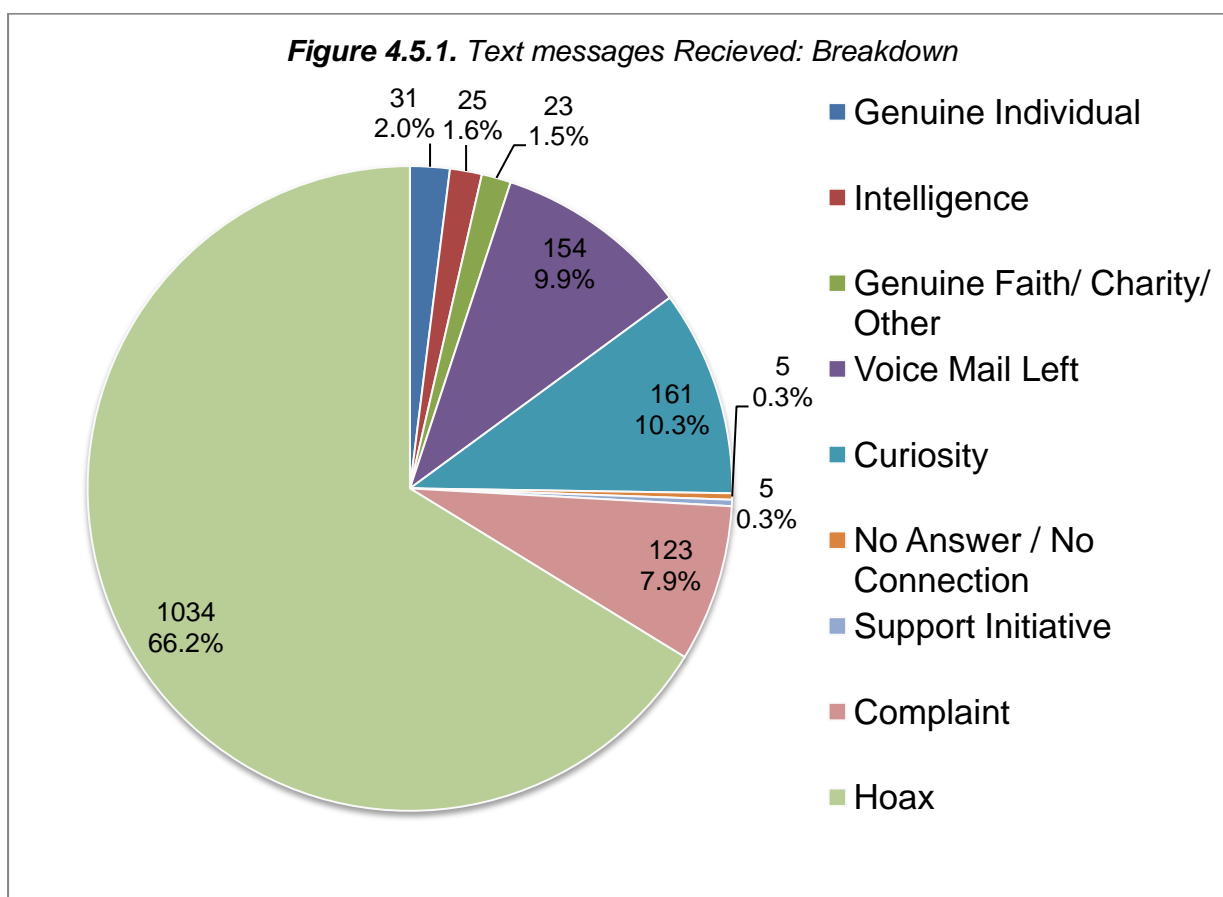
⁶ Average cost of £1,000 per voluntary departure based on Data held by the Department and are indicative of the cost of removal based on a sample of cases.

⁷ Average cost of £15,000 per enforced removal based on Data held by the Department and are indicative of the cost of removal based on a sample of cases.

the UK, could result in an average saving of up to £4,250 per year in public service costs⁸.

4.5 Enquiries to Operation Vaken:

- Following the implementation of Operation Vaken, 1,653 enquiries were received to either the text or telephone lines.
- In total, 1,561 Text messages were received. A breakdown of these texts is provided in Figure 4.5.1.
- Ninety two calls were received through the Operation Vaken telephone line. A breakdown of the calls received is provided in Figure 4.5.2.



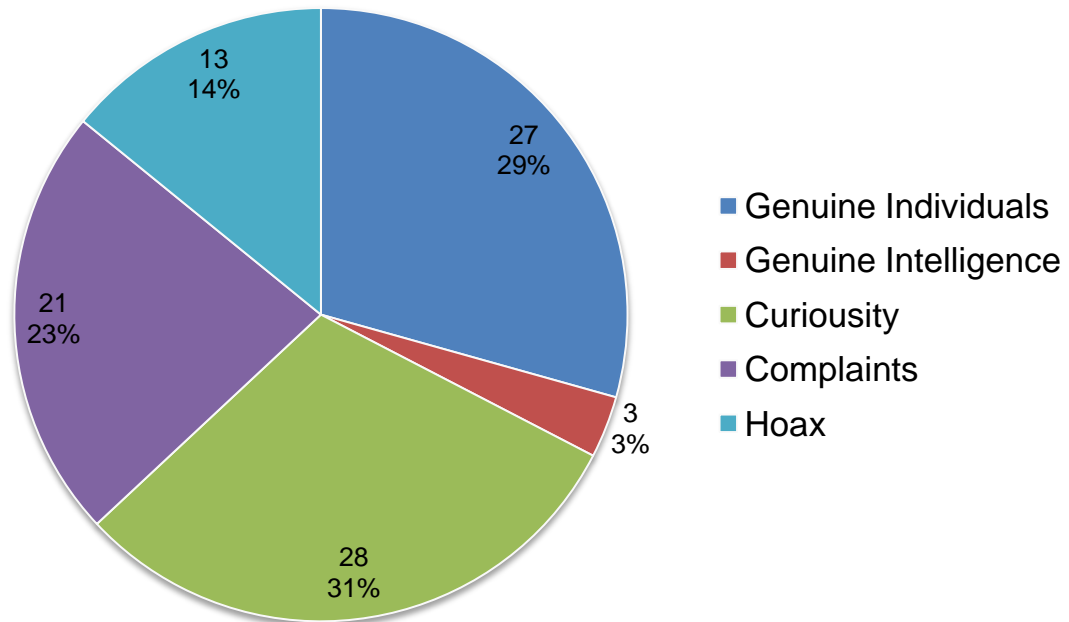
- Thirty one of the text messages resulted in genuine interest in voluntary departure. These individuals have either returned or are currently in the process of leaving the UK.
- Twenty three texts were received from faith, charity groups or individuals seeking further information on the voluntary returns process for their service

⁸ Based on Home Office estimates published in the Immigration Bill 2013 Impact Assessment.

users/friends. These groups/individuals have been contacted and provided with further information and support.

- There was also a cost attributable to the scheme from hoax calls which has not been included here. This is considered in section 5 below.

Figure 4.5.2. Calls Recieved - Breakdown



5. Further resource implications:

Staff time dealing with Calls/Texts

Text Messages:

- A total of 1,561 text messages were received; 1,034 of these were hoax messages.
- On average, it took staff one minute to deal with each text.
- In total approximately 26 hours of staff time was required to deal with all text messages; approximately 17 hours were required to deal with the hoax messages.

Phone Calls:

- Ninety two phone calls received. On average genuine calls took 10 minutes to deal with. All other calls took on average two minutes to deal with. In total approximately seven hours of staff time was required to deal with all calls.
- Thirteen hoax calls were received, taking approximately three minutes on average to deal with. Approximately one hour of staff time was required to deal with hoax calls.

6. Intelligence Gathered:

- The Operation Vaken team were contacted by 28 individuals offering to provide intelligence on illegal immigration. These individuals were provided with the contact details for the Home Office allegations service. It is not possible to retrospectively identify which allegations were related to Operation Vaken and of those which produced success in terms of enforcement visits.

Annex A – Operation Vaken Campaign material



*30 June - 6 July 2013 covering Barking and Dagenham, Redbridge, Barnet, Brent, Ealing and Hounslow

We can help you to return home voluntarily without fear of arrest or detention

Figure 1 Mobile billboard artwork



Figure 2 shop advert card

In the UK illegally?



WE CAN HELP YOU TO RETURN HOME

We can provide **FREE** advice, and **HELP** with travel documents to enable you to return home with dignity without fear of arrest or detention.

To find out more call:

We will call you back.

Or you can attend an immigration advisory surgery at:

© Crown Copyright 2013

The Home Office Voluntary Departures scheme supports the return of illegal immigrants to their home country.

Figure 3 poster (community use)

We can provide FREE advice, and HELP with travel documents to enable you to return home with dignity without fear of arrest or detention.

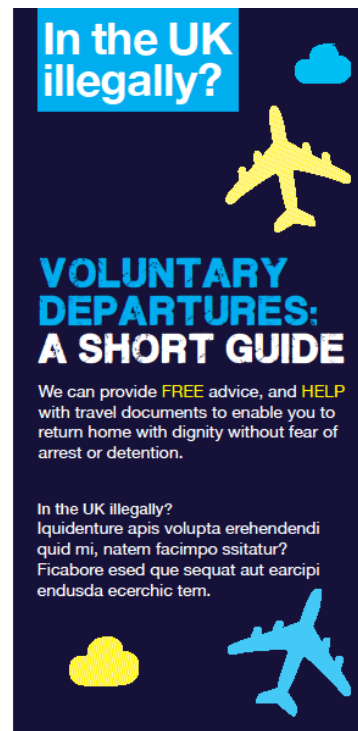
To find out more contact

Or you can attend an immigration advisory surgery at:

The Home Office Voluntary Departures scheme supports the return of illegal immigrants to their home country.

© Crown Copyright 2018 "Language"

Figure 4 leaflet front



What is voluntary departure?

Any person who has applied for asylum, has been refused permission to enter or stay in the UK or is living in the UK illegally can ask to make a voluntary departure. We know that many people living in the UK illegally want to go home, but feel scared of approaching the Home Office directly. They may fear being arrested and detained for example.

The Home Office will offer practical assistance to those who wish to go home voluntarily, from helping to book flights to completing documentation.

What are the benefits?

Voluntary departures cost the taxpayer significantly less than enforced removals, where returnees are detained and often escorted on their flight home.

For those returning voluntarily there are three key benefits:

- They avoid being arrested and having to live in detention until a travel document can be obtained
- They can leave the UK in a more dignified manner than if their removal is enforced

- If they leave voluntarily they are not barred from re-entering the UK for a period of up to 10 years (depending on the circumstances of the departure).

How can a voluntary departure be made?

Anyone interested in returning home voluntarily can contact the Home Office directly, or through a representative without fear of being detained.

Figure 5 leaflet inside